

Department of Historic Resources

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Updated Guidebook to Virginia's Historical Markers Now Available

—New edition's publication coincides with 80th anniversary of state's highway markers—

RICHMOND – A revised and updated edition of *A Guidebook to Virginia's Historical Markers* has been released to coincide with the 80th anniversary this year of the creation of Virginia's first silver-and-black signs focusing on the state's history, the Department of Historic Resources announced today.

"It has been more than a dozen years since the last appearance of a new guidebook to the state's historical markers," said Kathleen S. Kilpatrick, director of the Department of Historic Resources. "This new edition is timely. It arrives not only on the 80th anniversary of the marker program, which remains enormously popular today, but during a signal year in which Virginia and the nation commemorate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown. For that reason, the new guide should prove indispensable to Virginians and visitors alike who wish to discover or reacquaint themselves with the Commonwealth's rich history," said Kilpatrick.

The guidebook features almost 900 new or updated replacement markers installed along the Commonwealth's roads since the last edition of the book was published in 1994. Overall, it contains the texts and location for more than 1,850 of Virginia's historical markers.

In preparing the new edition, the staffs of the Department of Historic Resources, the agency responsible for approving new markers, and the Virginia Department of Transportation, the agency tasked with installing and maintaining the signs, double-checked each marker text and location in the book against the wording and placement of its corresponding roadside marker to ensure the book's accuracy.

The new guidebook's revised organization, as well as the addition of expanded marker indexes, makes it easier to look-up specific markers or topics and results in a useful reference and outstanding stimulus to greater study of Virginia history.

The first historical markers in Virginia were erected in 1927 along U.S. Rte. 1, between Fredericksburg and Richmond. In 1929 the Commonwealth published its first compact guide in response to the demand for a source that travelers could turn to at their leisure, a need arising at that time from the rapid increase in vehicle speeds and numbers of

motorists, which often made it difficult—and occasionally hazardous—to read a roadside marker.

Through the early decades of the program, markers were paid for by General Assembly funding, which ceased in 1976. Topics during that same period also focused mostly on Virginia's "great men," colonial buildings, and the major events of the American Revolution and Civil War.

During the past 20 years, marker topics have greatly expanded in order to tell the stories of the significant people, places, or events in the history of African Americans, Virginia Indians, women, and the 20th century, as well as many other important but previously neglected subjects.

Travelers in Virginia today will find markers honoring sites as diverse as Jamestown and the birthplace of Booker T. Washington, the graves of country music's Carter family and the original locations of northern Virginia's Nike missile installations, and the places where paramount chief Powhatan first met with the English and where artist Georgia O'Keeffe taught art.

The new edition of *A Guidebook to Virginia's Historical Markers*, which retails for \$19.95, was compiled by Scott David Arnold and published by the University of Virginia Press, in association with the Department of Historic Resources.

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